

The Origin of The First Joining

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Recorded from memory following the interview.

I was told this shouldn't be written down, but I could not let it fade. What follows is what I was told, not what I know.

The first time I saw them, I did not know to name what I saw. One stood quietly among the trees, and the other paused at the edge of the clearing. There was a stillness between them that made the air feel heavier, almost listening. I did not speak; I did not breathe too loud.

They did not touch, yet something passed from one to the other, like a sigh or a shadow. The taller one turned its head slowly, watching the smaller, and the smaller trembled—not with fear, I think, but recognition. A single leaf fell between them, as if marking the moment.

I remember a sound—not a voice, not a call—but a faint vibration through the ground. I pressed my hands to my knees, trying to feel it in my own body. They moved together then, not in step but in time, and I understood that what joined them was something older than names, older than the forest around us.

Afterward, the taller left first, disappearing through the shadows. The smaller lingered, looking back, then turning toward the rising light. I have returned to that clearing many times, but the weight of that joining never returned, only the memory of it pressing quietly, like a secret held in your chest.

A shadow moved among the trees, brushing past without sound. I thought it a trick of the light at first, until the smaller one turned its gaze directly toward it, unafraid. There was a recognition there, quiet and certain, that made the air pulse with something I could not name.

I noticed the way the taller lingered at the edge, watching. Not with curiosity, not with judgment, but with a still patience, as though waiting for the smaller to find its own place in the space between us. I did not see them speak, and yet the understanding between them was clear.

When they finally moved apart, the clearing seemed to exhale. The leaves and light returned to their usual rhythm, but something had shifted. I stayed longer than I

intended, feeling the memory settle around me, knowing I would carry it always without knowing why.